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# special feature lifestyle brands

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## MODERN MINDSET

Nine brands enter the lifestyle market



Lifestyle hotels have been all the rage this past year, with a new offering seeming to be announced every few weeks. The impetus for these new brands comes from changing guest demographics (thank Millennials in part for that) and evolving needs. Authenticity, community, location, and technology are now the dominant drivers. Here, we take a deeper look—from the history to the ethos to design highlights—at nine recently debuted industry game changers.

### Virgin Hotels

**The Backstory:** Four-plus years in the making since its original announcement that Sir Richard Branson's prolific brand was entering the hotel sphere, Virgin has opened its first property in Chicago, housed in the Old Dearborn Bank Building, a 27-story Art Deco landmark in the Loop designed in 1928 by C.W. and George L. Rapp Architects. Now it is home to 250 guestrooms, multiple restaurants, and a spa.

**Highlights:** "People are surprised that it's not what they expected—something very modern, very sleek, like the airline," explains Raul Leal, Virgin Hotels CEO. "We surprised them by saying, 'Hey, this is another side of Virgin you haven't seen.' It's warm, comfortable, not over designed. It's not in your face." Working with Rockwell Group Europe, original details like a cigar bar and ornate ceilings mingle with elements that bring to life Virgin's don't-take-

**1+2.** The Funny Library and Commons Bar in Virgin Hotels Chicago's Commons Club, part bar, study, and restaurant and the communal heart of the hotel.



## special feature lifestyle brands

### → Canopy by Hilton

**The Backstory:** Hilton Worldwide took its time with Canopy. For two years, company executives looked at the habits, wants, and needs of their guests. Four consumer mindsets began to emerge from this research: the originals (people who want authentic experiences); room-centric (those most interested in guestroom amenities); modern business travelers (who want to be productive); and cultured vacationers (guests who want to explore the local neighborhoods). "We think more about the mindset than the demographic," explains John Vanderslice, Hilton's global head of luxury and lifestyle brands. Canopy hones in on all those travelers while emphasizing locality.

**Highlights:** The light and bright lobby, Canopy Central, is the hub of the hotel, giving the neighborhood a chance to shine. No two hotels will be the same, but especially here, which acts as "the streetlamp to the neighborhood, with full-height metal-paneled windows and potentially garage doors connecting the life in the hotel with the life of the neighborhood," says Larry Traxler, Hilton's senior vice president of global design. The area features zones that flow together and includes a café-bar, reception-retail, and a space that is both an oasis and recharging



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5. A Canopy by Hilton guestroom rendering, featuring the bed enveloped in a wood-planked canopy.

6. A rendering of the lobby in Canopy's upcoming Portland, Oregon location.

station. The versatile lobby cultivates an energy that makes a guest feel "that you're in a cool, important place," says Vanderslice.

**Design Details:** For the first 10 properties, Hilton has teamed up with New York designer Mark Zeff to create Canopy's architecture, but the overall theme of comfort will be visible in each location. Traxler says the brand is "fresh and energizing" with a design that's "thoughtful, functional, and ergonomic, yielding comfort and simplicity for our guests."

Guestrooms, simply called Just Right, will use warm materials to create a tranquil oasis with a "beautiful bed enveloped in a stunning wood-planked canopy, open closets, an art wall with local pieces, and a large, inviting walk-in shower," Traxler says. A "judicious use of orange" gives it vibrancy, adds Vanderslice.

**Outlook:** Seeking cool neighborhoods in every city, the upper-upscale brand has 14 projects already in the works, 13 of which are new builds: each hotel will be between 120 and 150 keys. Properties in Portland, Oregon; London; Miami; Washington, DC; Nashville; Savannah; and Charlotte, North Carolina (among others) are expected to open by the beginning of 2016.

